

SOFTWARE

PREVIEW

Who do you think you are? That's not an insult, but an invitation from Avanquest to trace your family history, just like the BBC television show of the same name. Family Tree Maker Deluxe includes everything you need to discover your family's past, which can be fascinating if you've seen any of the celebrities doing just this on the show.

Starting with just a few basic facts about your family, you can quickly and easily build up a complete picture of the family you've never known. It works by accessing a huge collection of 300 million UK family history records online, using www.ancestry.co.uk, and automatically tracking down the details of distant relatives.

The website has censuses and parish and probate records dating back to the 1500s, so you can trace back much further than you might think. Then you can create family trees, descendant timelines, reports and albums, which you can share with the rest of your family. Don't miss our full review next month.

Jim Martin

Reviews Editor



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AVANQUEST Parallels Desktop 3 for Mac

★★★★★

£40 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

VMWARE Fusion

★★★★★

£50 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

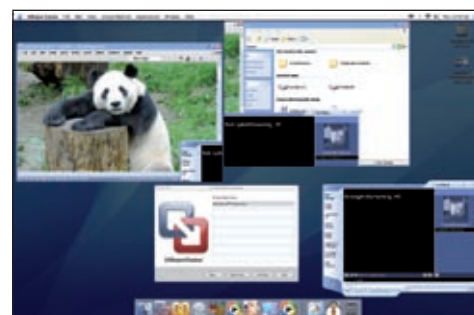
Apple's Boot Camp allows Macs with Intel processors to run Windows operating systems. However, you have to reboot your Mac to switch between Mac OS and Windows. Virtualisation software allows you to run Windows, or other operating systems such as Linux, alongside your Mac applications without rebooting. Parallels Desktop was one of the first virtualisation applications for the Mac, and Fusion is the first Mac-compatible program from virtualisation specialists VMWare.

We tested both programs on a Core 2 Duo T7700 iMac with Windows XP and Vista and allocated each operating system 1GB of RAM. You'll have to provide your own copies of Windows, and you'll need lots of hard disk space and memory to accommodate another operating system and programs. Parallels and Fusion can use an existing Boot Camp Windows partition, and both have configuration wizards that can install a fresh copy of Windows unattended. Both programs are similar, but there are some important differences.

One of Parallels' most eye-catching features is Coherence. This feature hides the Windows desktop and taskbar, so your Windows programs appear to be running side by side with your Mac applications instead of within a single window on your Mac desktop. Screen redraw can be choppy when moving windows, though.

The integration between the Mac OS and Windows under Parallels is impressive. Windows applications can be opened using the Mac OS Spotlight search tool or from the Windows Start menu, which is accessible from the Mac OS Dock. Text, but not images, can be copied and pasted using standard Mac keyboard short cuts. Files can be transferred by dragging and dropping. The contents of your Mac's Home, Documents, Movies, Music and Photos folders can be accessed seamlessly from their Windows counterparts. Parallels can also be configured so that when you double-click a document in Mac OS it opens in a Windows application.

We had no trouble connecting to a wireless network to access the internet and print to a network laser printer. Parallels is best suited for playing older 3D games, since it currently supports only DirectX 8.1. It managed to run our Prey benchmark at 11fps with reduced detail settings. The lack of DirectX 9 support means that Vista runs without its Aero 3D interface. More importantly, Parallels can't use both cores in a



▲ Both Coherence and Unity showed glitches switching between windows using Mac OS X's Expose switcher



▲ Windows programs such as Windows Media Player can run side by side with your Mac applications using Parallels' Coherence or Fusion's Unity mode

dual-core processor, so programs run more slowly; in our performance benchmarks, Parallels managed an overall score of just 129.

Fusion's Unity mode is almost identical to Parallels' Coherence, but Windows applications are launched using a Vista-style search window. Screen redraw is smoother, though, when moving windows. Both Fusion and Parallels exhibited some graphical glitches when switching between windows using the Mac OS Expose window switcher, though.

Fusion isn't as polished as Parallels in tying Windows and Mac OS together. Drag and drop as well as copying and pasting using Mac keyboard short cuts is present, but there's no seamless folder sharing as in Parallels. Mac Home folders are seen by Windows as network shares. We had no trouble connecting to a wireless network to surf the internet, but we had to adjust Windows' network settings manually to access a network laser printer using instructions from VMWare's website.

Fusion's advantage is performance. Although it is no better at playing modern games, it was faster than Parallels at copying data to and from a USB hard disk. Fusion took advantage of both cores in the iMac's processor and managed an overall score of 176, which is close to that of a similarly configured PC.

If you need to run Windows programs on your Mac only occasionally, Parallels has better integration between the Mac OS and Windows. If you regularly use demanding applications, Fusion's dual-core support gives it the edge. But if you want to play the latest Windows-only games, Apple Boot Camp's better DirectX support makes it the best choice.

Alan Lu

PARALLELS SUMMARY

- ✓ Good operating system integration
- ✓ Simple installation
- ✗ No dual-core support; sluggish USB2

VIRTUALISATION SOFTWARE Requires Mac OS X 10.4 Tiger, Intel processor, 512MB RAM
DETAILS www.parallels.com

FUSION SUMMARY

- ✓ Dual-core performance
- ✓ Simple installation
- ✗ Not as polished as Parallels

VIRTUALISATION SOFTWARE Requires Mac OS X 10.4.9 Tiger, Intel processor, 512MB RAM
DETAILS www.vmware.com

ROXIO

Easy Media Creator Suite 10

★★★★★

£50 inc VAT

From www.play.com

As Roxio's media-organising and editing suite hits double figures, it's barely recognisable from its early incarnation as a CD-burning application. It doesn't feel like a mature program, though. More than ever, this latest version has undergone an ungainly growth spurt, sprouting new features that follow the latest computing trends but not quite coming out the other side as a well-rounded product.

Version 10 works better with Windows Vista, integrating with its search facilities and coming with desktop gadgets for converting audio and video files and recording streaming web audio. The launcher, Roxio Central, looks smart but is otherwise largely unchanged, handling simpler tasks internally and launching the relevant module for more complex ones. However, certain advertised tasks are absent from the launcher, such as ringtone creation and the utility for fitting a photo to the phone screen's aspect ratio.

The disc-cataloguing tool introduced in Creator Deluxe (*Labs, Shopper* May 2007) is included, and is invaluable for keeping track of files archived to optical disc. An AutoMix function is designed to generate

automatic playlists to match your mood based on a selected song, but after over an hour's pondering time it decided there was nothing in our collection that matched the song we chose. A second attempt concluded that Nirvana and R'n'B artist Pharrell Williams are veritable peas in a pod; this is no match for Pandora.

The only brand-new application is BackOnTrack, a backup program that looks simple and inviting. But like Backup MyPC, which it replaces, it's confusing. A welcome screen claims the ability to recover files after virus attacks and hardware failure. However, the Disaster Recovery and Instant Restore buttons merely lead to upgrade offers. The only active component just backs up the My Documents folder by default, and sends schedules to Windows' Scheduled Tasks without informing the user of any way to amend existing schedules. It's liable to frustrate if you just want a simple, foolproof backup solution.

The new features are hit and miss. It's disappointing that the Media Manager tool hasn't had an overhaul. We like its handling of photo, audio and video files,



▲ Roxio Central is the starting place for a huge selection of media-related tasks

but it feels dated compared to free applications such as Picasa (*Labs, Shopper* December 2007) or iTunes (*Labs, Shopper* October 2007). The lack of integration with online photo gallery space is particularly disappointing.

There isn't enough to convince existing users to spend £45 on an upgrade, but for new users Creator offers a lot for its price. Video format conversion is well implemented, with straightforward export templates for everything from DVD and DivX to iPods and mobile phones. The video- and photo-editing tools meet the needs of casual users reasonably well and their integration with friendly import, management and export tools is a benefit for those who don't want to grapple with lots of different applications. Main rival Nero has more features, including TV viewing and recording functions, but Creator's more polished, tightly integrated interface means it's still our favourite of the two.

Ben Pitt

SUMMARY

- ✓ Friendly tools for popular PC tasks
- ✓ Tight integration of the modules
- ✗ Some new features are superfluous

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP or Vista, 500MHz processor, 128MB RAM (1.6GHz, 512MB for Vista), 3.2GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE 048068411
DETAILS www.roxio.co.uk

Also consider...

OPENOFFICE

OpenOffice.org 2.1

★★★★★

Free

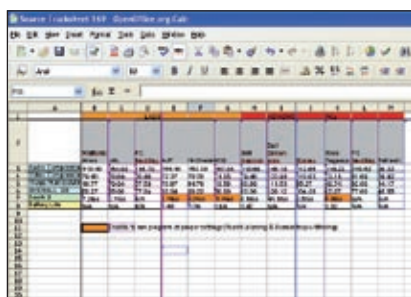
From www.openoffice.org

BEST BUY OpenOffice is a completely free office suite and it's brilliant. It might feel a little old-fashioned next to Microsoft Office's flashy features, but it has a number of excellent applications including the word processor, spreadsheet, database and presentation program. It's an essential piece of software for any PC owner.

OFFICE SUITE Requires Windows 98 or later, Pentium processor, 128MB RAM, 800MB disk space

DETAILS www.openoffice.org

✓ Excellent office suite; good document-checking features
✗ Macro function kept crashing FULL REVIEW Sep 2007



ADOBE

Creative Suite 3 Design Premium

★★★★★

£1,457 inc VAT

From www.amazon.co.uk

BEST BUY Adobe's Creative Suite has quickly become the best bundle of creative software. With its new Design Premium, it's got even better. The bundle includes InDesign, Photoshop Extended, Illustrator, Acrobat Professional, Flash Pro and Dreamweaver – everything you need, whether you're creating work for print or the web.

CREATIVE SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP SP2/Vista, 512MB RAM PRODUCT CODE 29500009

DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk ✓ Excellent value; tight integration between applications FULL REVIEW Aug 2007



ACRONIS

True Image 10 Home

★★★★★

£15 inc VAT

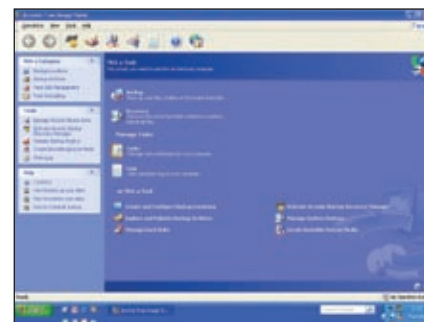
From www.ebuyer.com

BEST BUY True Image 10 from Acronis makes a complete copy of your PC's hard disk, operating system and all, so you can restore it to a working state easily.

It can make backups of folders and emails and even back up the settings of applications, providing you with everything you need to make sure your data is protected at all times.

IMAGING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 or later, 133MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 150MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE ATI10 DETAILS www.acronis.com ✓ Easy to use

✗ Some features not that useful FULL REVIEW Apr 2007



SONY Vegas Pro 8

★★★★★

£450 inc VAT

From www.sub.co.uk

Sony's flagship video-editing application has received abundant praise in *Shopper*, but the last update (reviewed in *What's New, Shopper* January 2007) was criticised for not providing enough in the way of new editing features to keep up with rival applications from Adobe and Avid. This version goes some way to allay our criticisms, but not as far as we would like.

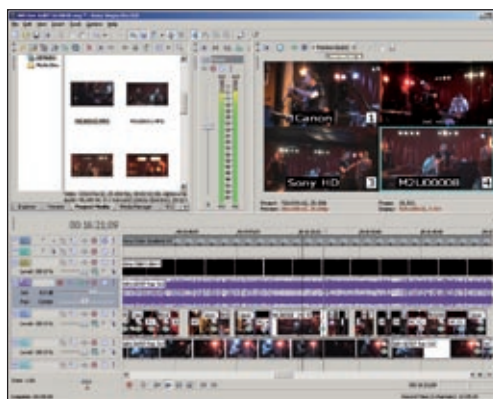
We're pleased to see the Pro suffix added to the product name, giving a clear distinction between this and the Movie Studio and Movie Studio Platinum versions aimed at home users. Also, the preview window resides at the top rather than the bottom of the screen by default – a nod to convention set out by more established applications. More significant is the introduction of 32-bit floating-point video processing, which gives far smoother, more accurate colours when applying radical effects settings. Unfortunately, the preview performance drops by anything from half to an eighth of the level achieved at the default 8-bit processing mode.

The new feature we're most excited about is multi-camera editing, which simplifies the

process of editing synchronised footage shot with multiple cameras. Up to four video streams are displayed in a two-by-two grid in the preview window, and selecting the active one simply involves clicking it with the mouse or the keyboard number pad. All effects are switched off to help give smoother previews, although even with a Core 2 Duo processor we were unable to edit HD footage in this way. However, for standard-definition MPEG2 or DV files, it worked flawlessly. Setting up for multi-camera editing is far simpler than in Adobe Premiere and it's easy to tidy up edits using the normal timeline controls.

The new ProType Titler adds considerable scope for sophisticated text animations, including the ability to adjust the size, position and formatting of individual words or letters. It's also possible to make text follow a curved path and to create separate keyframes for each parameter. The latter makes it easier to create smooth animations, where keyframes for rotation don't get muddled together with keyframes for scale and position, for example. The downside is a lot of keyframes to contend with, but we gladly accept this drawback for the greater precision it provides.

Sadly, curved paths and multi-track keyframes remain unavailable for video and graphics clips. Various options such as Smooth, Linear or Hold control the speed of movement, but the path is always linear. This is an



▲ The new Multicam feature makes light work of editing scenes shot with up to four cameras

area where Vegas's main rivals, Adobe Premiere Pro and Avid Liquid, have a significant lead, with comprehensive control over the speed and the path between keyframes, giving more natural-looking object motion. We're also less than keen on Vegas's separate tools for 2D and 3D motion, which would be better off being integrated into a single, comprehensive motion editor.

Vegas Pro 8 is a worthy update to an already excellent application. For most users it is our top recommendation, thanks to unparalleled speed and ease of use, comprehensive format support, precise, powerful editing tools and fantastic DVD-authoring facilities. However, the basic keyframe editing is a limitation that must be overcome before it will warrant our recommendation for the most demanding users. Until then, Premiere Pro CS3 is a better choice, despite its price.

Ben Pitt

SUMMARY

- ✓ Titling and multi-camera editing tools
- ✓ Powerful video editing and DVD authoring
- ✗ Object motion tools need a makeover

VIDEO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP SP2 or Vista, 1GHz processor (2.8GHz for HDV), 1GB RAM, 600MB disk space
PRODUCT CODE SVDVDSB8000
DETAILS www.sonycreativesoftware.com

Also consider...

ADOBE Photoshop Lightroom 1.0

★★★★★

£149 inc VAT

From www.parkcameras.com



Adobe's Lightroom is everything a digital camera enthusiast could want. It helps manage your images, process RAW files, correct colour, retouch and export to a range of media. It's brilliant to use and, although designed for professional photographers, a great choice for anyone with an expensive camera.

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, Pentium 4 processor, 768MB RAM, 1GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE 19250102 DETAILS www.adobe.co.uk
✓ Powerful photo manipulation ✗ Basic noise reduction and sharpening FULL REVIEW Jul 2007



MR SITE Takeaway Website

★★★★★

£35 for first year + £2.90 a month from then on

From www.mrsite.com



Takeaway Website is everything you need to build your own website. Its price includes hosting for a year, a domain name and a website-design package. There are templates for creating blogs, guest books, feedback forms and galleries, which makes this perfect for the beginner.

WEBSITE-CREATION SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 or later, Internet Explorer 6 DETAILS www.mrsite.com
✓ Excellent value; powerful site creation tools
✗ Style options are limited FULL REVIEW Apr 2007



STEGANOS AntiVirus 2007

★★★★★

£20 inc VAT

From www.steganos.com/uk



Steganos AntiVirus uses software from Kaspersky, so you get the best anti-virus protection for a lot less money. In our recent Labs test (*Shopper* April 2007) it beat every other anti-virus application hands down. For full system protection, you'll need Steganos Internet Security, which costs £30 inc VAT.

ANTI-VIRUS SOFTWARE Requires Windows 98 or later, 300MHz processor, 128MB RAM, 50MB disk space
DETAILS www.steganos.com/uk ✓ Powerful protection against viruses ✗ Doesn't protect against spyware or hackers FULL REVIEW Apr 2007



ADOBE Photoshop Elements 6

★★★★★

£69 inc VAT

From www.adobe.com/uk

Photoshop Elements has one big advantage over its many rivals in the photo-editing market: it can borrow features from its big brother, the professional version of Photoshop.

One key new feature in this latest version of Elements is a technology called Photomerge, which comes straight from Photoshop. As the name implies, it allows you to merge elements taken from multiple photos to create seamless composite images.

There are two main ways of using this new feature. You can use it as a special effects trick to combine people's faces or, as Adobe puts it, "you can combine your face with your current squeeze to see how your offspring would look". To do this, you simply open a couple of photos and then select the Photomerge option from the main File menu. This places a set of markers on each photo, which are used to align the photos correctly. You can then use the brush tool to pick out elements from one photo – such as the eyes and nose – and copy them across to the second photo to create a merged image.

However, there's also a more practical use for Photomerge, as you can use it with group shots as well. Instead of just combining facial elements, you can take a person entirely out of one shot and move them into another. We had a chance

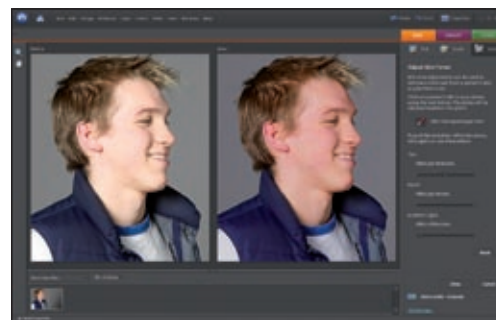
to put Photomerge to the test a few days after we installed Elements 6. We were in the park with some friends and their children, but getting them to smile angelically at exactly the same time proved a bit tricky. Loading the photos into Elements, we used the Photomerge Groups option to pick the best bits out of each photo in order to create the perfect group shot.

Photomerge is a very powerful editing tool, and it certainly throws down a gauntlet to rivals such as Corel's Paint Shop Pro. Our only criticism is that we did struggle a bit with the online Help files, and it took us a little while to experiment with the Photomerge options before we understood how to use them properly.

Other aspects of the program have been simplified and made easier to use. For complete beginners, there's a new Guided editing mode to help you get started. Just click the Guided button in the right-hand corner of the screen and you'll see a list of common tasks, such as cropping an

image or correcting colour balance. When you select a task, the program displays step-by-step instructions that show you which tools to select and how to apply them to your photos.

Most photo-editing programs provide similar instructions for beginners, but we particularly



▲ The new 'Guided' mode in Photoshop Elements lets you see 'before' and 'after' versions of your photos

appreciated the option to view 'before' and 'after' versions of your photos. This makes it easier to see how your changes affect each photo. There's also detailed help provided for projects such as creating a photo gallery for a website or using photos to create calendars and cards.

We do have a couple of complaints. We didn't like the murky grey used throughout the interface. More importantly, Elements is now split into two separate programs. The Organiser, which allows you to view and sort through your collection of photos quickly, is separate from the main Editor program. Having to switch back and forth between the two programs can be irritating. We also got the occasional annoying error message telling us we couldn't switch from the Editor to the Organiser because "the Organiser is busy".

The integration between the Editor and Organiser programs could be improved. Even so, Photoshop Elements still manages to stand out from rivals such as Corel's Paint Shop Pro thanks to its combination of powerful editing tools, easy-to-use interface and attractive price.

Cliff Joseph

SUMMARY

- ✓ Powerful photo-editing tools
- ✓ Easy for beginners to use
- ✗ Two separate applications

PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE Requires Windows XP/Vista, 1.3GHz processor, 1GB RAM, 1.5GB disk space
PRODUCT CODE ASIN: B000VZEIOS
DETAILS www.adobe.com/uk

WORLDWEAVER DX Studio 2.1

★★★★★

£59 inc VAT

From www.dxstudio.com

Modelling and animation in 3D has never been easy or cheap. DX Studio turns this notion on its head by letting even novices create interactive worlds for under £60. Your PC needs to have a DirectX 9 graphics card for the program to work. It can then render your models and worlds in real time.

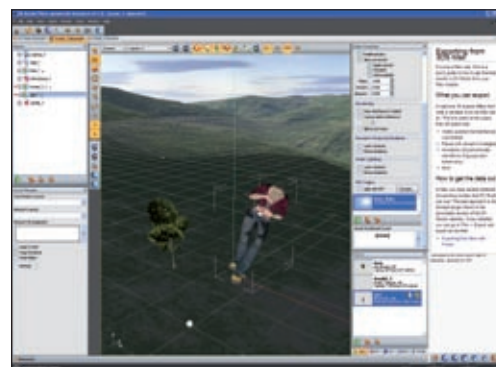
This £59 version is a non-commercial licence, which doesn't allow you to sell your creations. To do that, you would need the commercial version, which starts at £175. There is also a Pro Edition, for twice as much, which offers extra features including a built-in database client.

The big new addition with this version of DX Studio is the arrival of a modeller. Where previously you had to import models

created in other applications (such as 3D Studio Max), you can now create them in DX Studio. The modeller allows you to add basic 3D shapes, or draw 2D shapes and convert them into 3D. However, you may need a more advanced modeller for complex objects such as people.

Fortunately, DX Studio comes with a library of detailed objects, plus an online collection of free assets. You can simply import these to create your scene, or any objects in the

XML-based COLLADA format. You can then add animation sequences and attach scripts to objects to control movement and user interaction, which means you can make your own 3D game. However, you will need to understand JavaScript for this. You can



▲ Create your own interactive 3D worlds with DX Studio

even enable physics for each object, so balls, for example, bounce off other objects.

Your project can be exported in a variety of ways. Alongside the usual options of image sequences, animated GIFs and AVIs, you can also build self-contained executables, HTML and even Windows Vista Desktop Gadgets.

DX Studio is packed with possibilities and, as such, is a bit daunting at first. Fortunately, lots of help and tutorials are provided. A free trial version is also available to download and is well worth a look.

James Morris

SUMMARY

- ✓ Lets you make interactive 3D worlds
- ✓ Affordable
- ✗ Steep learning curve

3D MODELLING SOFTWARE Requires Windows 2000 or later, 512MB RAM, 200MB disk space, DirectX 9 graphics card
DETAILS www.dxstudio.com